

May 5, 2011

*Washington, D.C. – Congressman Ben Ray Luján of New Mexico's Third District spoke on the House floor today to offer the Democratic Motion to Recommit to H.R. 1230, a Republican bill that increases drilling in the United States, but fails to bring down gas prices. Luján's amendment would guarantee that oil produced in America would stay in America and not be shipped to other countries. All but one Republican voted against the amendment. Below are his remarks as prepared.*

"Mister Speaker and my colleagues, American families are hurting right now. When the cost of gas at the pump rises that means the cost of groceries goes up, the cost of goods goes up, and the cost of just getting to work goes up.

"The American people need relief and the way this legislation is written, it will do nothing to decrease the price at the pump and will do nothing to lower the international price of oil.

"All day today, my colleagues on the other side of the aisle have suggested that drilling more is the solution to high gas prices. And if my Republican colleagues really believe that increasing drilling in the U.S. will lower gas prices then we should all be able to agree that oil produced in America should stay in America to help American families and American businesses.

"And that's why I am offering this final amendment today to ensure that oil resources that are produced through leasing under this act are kept here and sold here in the United States. Simply put, this means if we produce it here we should keep it here for the American people.

"Mr. Speaker, I come from a state that has oil and gas production, and we know how important domestic production is. We don't disagree that production in the U.S. is important. Personally, I favor a more comprehensive approach, a plan to reduce our dependence on foreign oil, one

that includes natural gas, wind, and solar; one that grows new industries and creates jobs that cannot be outsourced out of the United States.

“And while I disagree with my Republican colleagues’ approach, I think we can all agree that something must be done to reduce the price of gasoline for consumers. The American people want us to work together to lower gas prices. Plain and simple. They know our country is far too reliant on foreign oil, and they want us to do something real about it. Plain and simple.

“At a time when gas prices are at historic highs, if we’re going to produce more from American drilling we should keep it in America to help Americans.

“We’ve heard from the other side that the solution is as simple as producing more oil in the U.S., but that’s not going to lower costs in the international energy markets. That’s not how it works.

“Mr. Speaker, U.S. domestic oil production is already at its highest level in almost a decade. That’s a fact. In the last two years, oil production from the U.S. Outer Continental Shelf has increased by more than a third. That’s a fact. So while we see our domestic production going up, the price at the pump is going up even higher. And that’s hurting families.

“Without this amendment, there is nothing in the Republican bill that would guarantee that oil produced under this act would stay in the United States to offer relief for the American people.

“But we can change all of that. We can come together, do what’s right for the American people, and support this amendment that simply says that oil produced in the United States under these leases would stay in the United States.

“My Republican colleagues will tell us that this bill is about sending a message to OPEC and to the world that we are willing to produce our own oil. If we’re going to send a message, Mr. Speaker, let’s send the message that when we drill on the taxpayers’ land that America’s oil should stay right here in America to lower prices at the pump. Plain and simple.

“To my colleagues, when you go home to your district this weekend, ask your constituents if they think oil produced in the U.S. should be kept in the U.S. and refined in the U.S. for American consumers, American families, and American businesses, or if it should be shipped out of the country. What do you think they’ll say?

“Quite simply, that is the choice. And that is all this final amendment says. It will not kill this bill. If it is adopted, then it would immediately be incorporated into the underlying bill and the bill will be voted upon immediately.

“Let’s do something for the American people and, plain and simple, let’s support this amendment. I urge my colleagues to vote yes.”

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